

Paine (H.D.)

ADDRESS

BEFORE THE

HOMŒOPATHIC MEDICAL SOCIETY

OF THE

STATE OF NEW YORK.

DELIVERED MAY 10, 1865.

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BY THE PRESIDENT, HENRY D. PAINE, M. D.,
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It is one of the most remarkable things in the world, and at the same time, one of the saddest and most lamentable, that the practice of medicine, an art of daily necessity and of daily exercise, which most nearly affects the dearest interest of mankind, and to the improvement of which we are encouraged and impelled by the strongest motives of interest and humanity, of love for our neighbor and zeal for our profession—should, after a probation of so long a period and a recorded experience of at least two thousand years, still remain, as it confessedly does in most respects, and as usually understood, an instrument of such doubtful and uncertain application.

Admitting, as we must, that in the nature of things it *is* one of the most difficult of all arts—dealing with elements and phenomena the most complex, variable, subtle and uncertain—admitting all this, it must nevertheless, seem strange to the thoughtful mind, that with opportunities of daily observation, continued through so many centuries, and by so many interested and anxious observers, there should be so little, either in matters of fact, or theory, that can be considered as settled and established.

The phenomena of health and disease, and the effects of drugs and all other agencies capable of influencing the human system, however intricate and obscure, are strictly matters of observation; and it would appear reasonable that in the course of time—longer or shorter—some fixed principles concerning the manner in which these phenomena and these effects occur, should have been evolved and established, and the relations between them so recognized and defined as to be made available in the cure of the sick, the relief of the suffering and the prevention of disease.

That this expectation, both moderate and reasonable, has not been fulfilled in any satisfactory degree, so far, at least, as the dominant and hitherto prevailing systems of practice are concerned, is evident. Not only have the wits and satirists of every age found in the uncertainties, absurdities and inefficiency of medicine, abundant food for their ridicule and their sarcasm, but thoughtful and philosophic men, both in and out of the profession, have admitted and deplored its low estate and tardy progress. There is scarcely a point relating to the nature of any disease or its proper treatment—or the nature, effects, and use of any medicinal agent, upon which there is not to be found the greatest diversity of opinion and practice among medical men. Not only do the writers of one age or country controvert and oppose the views and practice of a previous era or another country, but coteremporaneous physicians of the same school and nation, of the same city or district, are far from being unanimous on these subjects. Nay, examples will readily occur to every physician here present, of professors in the same college, teaching doctrines and insisting upon principles utterly diverse and irreconcilable with each other.

Let us illustrate these remarks by an example. Among diseases that have been longest known and best described, none, perhaps, has received more attention, or been subjected to more extended observation, than Typhus Fever. A disease of acknowledged severity, of frequent occurrence and well marked symptoms, it has ever been studied with the closest scrutiny, and its nature, cause and treatment subjected to the ordeal of the most critical investigation, and at times the sharpest controversy. The most learned physicians of every age have devoted their wisdom to its elucidation, and the volumes that have been written upon it in all languages would, of themselves, form an extensive library. The essential character and most appropriate treatment of a disease so long and thoroughly known, so important and so interesting, must, long ago, it would seem, have become so well understood as to leave little occasion for further investigation or discussion. But a brief citation of the various opinions that have successively prevailed on these points, even within the last fifty or sixty years, will show that it offers no exception to the general statement respecting the instability of medical science. To avoid the suspicion of unfairness, I shall state the case in the language of one of the most candid and learned of Allopathic writers rather than my own:

"At the termination of the last century," says Dr. Bostock,* "while the doctrine of Cullen was generally embraced, Typhus Fever was called a disease of debility, and was, of course, to be cured by tonics and stimulants. No sooner was it ascertained to exist than bark and wine were administered in as large doses as the patient could be induced or was found able to take. No doubt was entertained of their power over the disease; the only question that caused any doubt in the mind of the practitioner was, whether the patient could bear the quantity that would be necessary for the cure. To this treatment succeeded that of cold affusion. The high character and literary reputation of the individual who proposed this remedy, its simplicity and easy application, bore down all opposition, and we flattered ourselves that we had at length subdued the formidable monster. But we were doomed to experience the ordinary process of disappointment—the practice, *as usual*, was found inefficient or injurious, and it was after a short time supplanted by the lancet. But this practice was even more short lived than either of its predecessors; and thus, in a space of less than forty years we have gone through three revolutions of opinion with respect to our treatment of a disease of very frequent occurrence, and of the most decisive and urgent symptoms."

And it may be added, that the treatment of the disease referred to has not become a whit more settled and satisfactory since the above melancholy exhibit was written. Within the memory of most of us the calomel treatment, the beef-steak treatment, the saline treatment, the turpentine treatment and the do-nothing treatment, has each had its day of popularity and its zealous advocates, and its equally earnest opponents.

What is true in regard to Typhus Fever might also be said with equal truth of almost every other disease with which humanity is afflicted. Considerations such as these have drawn from the most reputable writers

* History of Medicine.

mournful concessions of the general defects of the so called art of cure. Says Boerhaave: "If we compare the good which half a dozen true disciples of Æsculapius have done since their art began, with the evil which the immense numbers of doctors have inflicted on mankind, we must be satisfied that it would have been infinitely better for mankind if medical men had never existed."

The late lamented Dr. Abercrombie has well stated the case in the following remarkable language, which, although often quoted, deserves the serious attention of the contemners of medical reform and innovation: "Since medicine was first cultivated as a science," says he, "a leading object of attention has been to ascertain the characters and symptoms by which internal diseases are indicated, and by which they are distinguished from other diseases that resemble them. But with the accumulated experience of ages bearing upon this important subject, an extended observation has only served to convince us how deficient we are in this department, and how often, even in the first steps of our progress we are left to conjecture. An equal or even more remarkable uncertainty attends all our researches on the action of external agents upon the body. These engage our attention in two respects, as causes of disease and as remedies, and in both these views the action of them is fraught with the *highest degree of uncertainty*." And again, as with the keen edge of his truthful satire, he lays bare the weak foundations of professional assumption, he continues: "When in the practice of medicine we apply to new cases the knowledge acquired from other cases, which we believe to be of the same nature, the difficulties are so great that it is doubtful whether in any case we can properly be said to act upon experience as we do in other branches of science. * * * The difficulties and sources of uncertainty which meet us at every stage of our investigation, are, in fact, so *great* and *numerous* that those who have had the most extensive opportunities of observation will be the first to acknowledge that our pretended experience must, in general, sink into analogy, and even our analogy, too often, into conjecture."

It would be easy to fill many pages and to occupy the whole time of this address with similar extracts from Allopathic writers of the highest reputation of different periods. But these already quoted are surely a sufficient confirmation of the assertion that the boasted experience of the old systems has not, so far, resulted in the discovery and recognition of any fixed and settled principles of medical philosophy. And since medicine had a literature there never was so little unanimity in the teaching or practice of the profession as in our own day. There was a time, extending over hundreds of years, during which there was universal acquiescence in one system of philosophy, one doctrine of pathology, and one rule of practice. The writings of Hippocrates were, during those ages, held to contain the sum and substance of all medical knowledge, and he was the best physician who understood best and adhered most closely to the teachings of that "father of medicine." The medical writers of those days never ventured to controvert in the slightest degree his opinions or his statements. To explain, to enlarge upon, to illustrate them, was considered all that the wisest and the most experienced of his successors might presume to do.

When at length it came to pass that the Hippocratic doctrine lost its

hold upon the minds of men, and other systems and methods succeeded it, the profession, till then a unit, began to break up into schools and sects, each claiming for itself a superiority over all others, and too apt to denounce such as dared to think, or teach, or practice differently from the received authority. And the disintegration has gone on, in a sort of geometrical ratio, till in these latter days every physician claims to be independent, and prides himself upon the originality and peculiarity of his views. Every doctor forms his own theory and builds up his own system to suit himself, according to his preconceived ideas, or, as he believes, from his own experience; and one who should not profess to hold some notions different from his brethren would, very likely, be set down as a weak and servile imitator.

If in this we see good reason for congratulation that modern physic is emancipated from the clogs and trammels of ancient prejudice, and undue subjection to authority, we cannot but allow, at the same time, that it still exhibits a state of sad unsettledness and confusion.

These remarks and animadversions have special reference to what may be called the practical departments of medical science—those, namely, of Pathology, Therapeutics and the *Materia Medica*. For as they are of most immediate interest and concernment to us in the daily duties of our calling, so unfortunately, it is in regard to them that we have most to lament the lack of well defined and established principles.

This is the more remarkable when we consider the great progress made in such auxiliary sciences as anatomy, chemistry and physiology, as are embraced in the idea of a complete medical education. For of them it cannot be said that they have not partaken of the impulse of modern investigation and discovery, or that their earnest cultivation has not been fruitful of grand results. No branches of natural or experimental science have been, within these fifty years, more assiduously and successfully studied than these.

The anatomist is no longer content with a knowledge, however full and exact, of the more obvious structures of the body, the bones, muscles, blood vessels, nerves, viscera, &c., in all their various relations, but pursues his investigations into the deeper recesses of their organization, with a zeal that can only be appreciated by those who know something of the difficulties to be encountered. There is no artery but has been followed to its farthest ramification; no nerve but has been traced through all its delicate thread-like windings; no tissue, or membrane, or fibre but has been separated and displayed, and the form and arrangement of its ultimate structure determined. Where the eye and the scalpel have failed, chemistry and the microscope have been summoned to carry out the inquest. Microscopical or minute anatomy has, in these later years, almost reached the dignity of a distinct science, wonderful in its accomplished revelations, but promising still greater results in the future.

The achievements of modern chemistry, from their character and their extensive relations with other branches of science and the arts, are more generally understood and appreciated. They have, indeed, been of the most surprising description, and have elevated the science to a position as much superior to the alchemy of the middle ages, as modern astronomy is to the astrology of the same dark period.

If as much cannot be said of physiology, it is not from the want of diligent and enthusiastic cultivation, but rather from the difficulties inherent in the science itself and the later period when correct principles of investigation were applied to it. It is indeed but a few years since a high authority on this subject felt warranted in using such language as the following:

"Would that I could say of physiology—in the language of Bacon, 'the science of ourselves'—that it has pursued the same course and undergone the same metamorphosis, as the physical sciences. But unfortunately this is not the case. Physiology is still in the minds of many, and in some of our books a mere work of the imagination. It has its different creeds, and opposite and contending sects. * * * In a word, it may be said to be the frame-work of a religion strangely filled with scientific terms."

But under the influence of a more careful observation and rigid scrutiny of facts, physiology is rapidly taking rank among the most progressive of its sister sciences. The functions of many organs and tissues have been ascertained—the circulation and composition of the blood—the seat and channels of sensation—the power and direction of the muscular forces—the phenomena of nutrition, secretion and reproduction—the processes of decay and transformation, have been demonstrated and described.

But while we gratefully recognize the progress which these important sciences have made, and admire the proud position they have reached, so much more marked is the contrast between them and those branches of learning which are properly embraced in the term "Practical Medicine," which have to do with medicine as an art and a profession, and to the perfection of which those auxiliary and collateral studies are, or ought to be subservient. The value of anatomy, chemistry, botany, pharmacy, and other kindred branches, to the practising physician, consists in the advantage he derives from them in relieving and curing his patients in the surest, safest and easiest way. It is to this end and for this purpose that he has spent his years of pupilage in the laboratory and the dissecting room, and mastered the hard, dry technicalities of the schools. However interesting these studies may be in themselves (and none are more deserving of cultivation), how immeasurably more important would they be to us as practising physicians, if by their means we were taught the mysteries of disease—its secret causes and its essential nature—or the most potent agencies for its removal, and the restoration of the sick to health and vigor. But it must be admitted that no such advantages to practical medicine have followed from the labors of the anatomist, the chemist, or even the physiologist, as might naturally have been expected. Though they have wonderfully enlarged the boundaries of our knowledge in other directions, yet in the one point of greatest interest to us as a profession having the charge and responsibility of the sick upon our hands, they have almost entirely failed to enlighten us. The most accomplished anatomist has not yet been able to discover the essential nature—the proximate cause—of a fever, an inflammation or a neuralgia. The most expert chemist cannot conjecture why one drug acts upon the nerves and another on or through the blood, nor why two poisons which may be almost identical in composition produce such varied effects. Nor can either of them answer

one in a thousand the questions that concern the relations which drugs and other agents bear to the human system in health and disease. So, while all other sciences grow apace, and in their progress and results excite our constant admiration, the science of Therapeutics and the art of cure yet linger far behind.

The cause of this tardy advance in an art the most needful and the most important of all that relate to this life, may be found in the neglect of a true system and course of observation. Not but that there have always been anxious watchers of the phenomena which sickness, disease and death furnish to the world daily. But it is the misfortune of our profession, that in it there has ever been a supremacy of theory over fact, and a loose collation of experiences, not for the purpose of laying the foundation of a legitimate practice, but rather with the object of building up and fortifying systems preconceived.

It is as true now as it was thirty or forty years ago, when it was asserted by the learned Dr. Todd that he felt himself "fully warranted by long and ample experience, in affirming that whether it be considered in its scientific relations, or in its practical details, no department of knowledge so urgently demands the wholesome reform of a close and scrutinizing induction." Or, as Dr. James Johnson asserts,* "much of the uncertainty, obscurity and difficulty which is encountered, has arisen, and continues to flow from the irrational manner in which medicine has been taught and studied. This no one can deny who is capable of forming any opinion upon the matter. * * * General inferences are drawn from particular premises—individual cases are made the models of entire epidemics—effects are confounded with causes, and causes with effects, the sequent with the antecedent, and the antecedent with the sequent—resemblances are discovered where none exist, and points of difference are detected where more minute inquiry would have found nothing but accordance."

If medicine is less a science of experience than other sciences, is it not owing to the fact, admitted by many candid writers, that the instrument and art of experience have never yet been properly applied to it? There certainly does seem to be no reason why the medical facts that have been accumulating since the fall and to which each day adds a larger store, should not be subjected to the same rigid scrutiny, and brought within the grasp of inductive reasoning, and made to stand on the same footing as those of other sciences of observation and experiment.

It will not be denied that there are some impediments in the nature of the case, that render the application of these rules to medicine peculiarly difficult, but these can be overcome, it cannot be doubted, by the repeated labors of many, honestly and truly undertaken and persevered in. "If the method of observing was reformed, and the observation subjected to the assay of a searching induction," hopefully says Dr. Todd, "it is impossible to foretell what might be the happy results; and certainly not before such a trial has been fairly made, is it allowable to say that medicine cannot be elevated to the rank of the other sciences."

Even before these words were written, was this necessary and desired reformation begun. For already was the foundation laid, and even the

* *Med. Chi. Rev.*, xvi, 38.

superstructure had taken shape, of a system of practical medicine built upon pure observation and a rigid analysis. Discarding all preceding theories and divesting his mind, as far as possible, of all merely hypothetical preconceptions as to the nature of disease, and the relations of remedial agents to the human system, Hahnemann devoted his great genius to the development of a therapeutic law from a cautious comparison of authentic facts sifted from the husks and chaff of theory and conceit.

It does not fall in with my design to entertain you with an account of the rise, history and progress of Homœopathy, or an exposition of its principles and peculiarities. The life and character of Hahnemann—the gradual unfolding of his great discovery—the painful trials and impediments with which the new method has had to contend, and its present favorable position, would each be a fitting theme for the present occasion. But the discussion of these topics has so frequently engaged your attention both in the proceedings of the Society and in the standard publications of our school, that I forbear to occupy your time on this occasion, with a repetition of statements and arguments with which my audience are already familiar.

I shall content myself with saying, in this connection, that we claim for Homœopathy that it fulfills the required conditions of that long desired reform in medicine more completely than any system of treatment that has gone before it. It stands upon the platform indicated by the most candid and thoughtful minds, namely: that of a pure, cautious and repeated observation, systematically pursued, and tested by experience. As the result of proceedings so conducted, under the guiding genius of Hahnemann, has been evolved, that beneficent law of cure, expressed in the brief but comprehensive formula, *SIMILIA SIMILIBUS CURANTUR*, and which is destined to accomplish, sooner or later, a complete revolution in medical philosophy and medical methods. It is no mere hypothesis first formed in the mind of the proposer and then defended by a partial and imperfect selection of proofs, like the multitude of fanciful systems that preceded it; but a legitimate deduction from authentic facts well weighed and compared.

The announcement of a discovery so important and fraught with consequences so momentous to medical science, by a man of the acknowledged high character and reputation of Hahnemann, could not fail to attract attention. But it was not to be expected, considering the usual fate of similar discoveries, that a principle and the system built upon it necessarily involving a complete reconstruction of the art of healing as heretofore established, would be accepted without opposition, denial and even ridicule. What treatment it has experienced at the hands of the profession, both in the old world where it was first promulgated, and in this free land under more liberal and, as we claim, more enlightened political institutions, is well known to all.

Not only has the system itself been assailed with ridicule, but its advocates and practitioners have been subjected to obloquy, professional discourtesy, and all the enginery of vindictiveness.

While we cannot pause to disprove every false allegation, or to confute every sophistical impeachment that our opponents may bring against us, it seems fitting on this occasion to notice an assault made by the Allopathic Medical Society of this State, speaking through its president, Dr. Thomas

Hun, and published in a late volume of the "transactions" of that society. In his annual address delivered before the society in 1863, upon the "Influence of the progress of Medical Science upon Medical Art," Dr. Hun recognized the fact "that a great revolution in medical practice is going on; that the notions which have prevailed, and to a great extent do still prevail, as to the objects and limits of our art, require great modifications, and that our pretensions in the healing of disease must be far more humble than they have been." He exposes the false and mischievous assumptions of the "regular" profession, and speaks of its "errors and impostures" in language that would be considered as abusive if employed by one of another school. He justifies the ridicule of the satirists and the criticism of the grave, which have served, as he declares, "to expose our exaggerated pretensions in the cure of disease, and to show on how slight a foundation our routine of practice reposed." While he deplores "what has happened in the dark paths which we and our predecessors have trod," he is not less emphatic in asserting the necessity for a complete reconstruction of the old systems of Therapeutics.

It may readily be believed that the bold and emphatic expression of sentiments like these from one holding so distinguished a position in the Allopathic ranks, would not fail to excite among his brethren feelings of dissatisfaction and alarm, as savoring over much of professional insubordination and an implied approval of Homœopathy. So marked, indeed, were the signs of disapprobation in certain quarters, that in order to counteract the not unnatural "misconstruction," which he admits some have fallen into, and to set himself right upon the record as an orthodox Allopathist, the doctor deems it necessary to append to his published address at attack upon Homœopathy and its friends, in the form of a note, in which, among other things, he gravely discusses the important question, "Is Homœopathy quackery?" Of course, the anticipated answer to the question thus propounded could only be in the affirmative, else why should it have been obtruded into the discussion; but those who heard or have read only the address, will be interested to learn by what peculiar line of argument the predetermined result is reached.

It is foreign to my inclination to reply to attacks of this nature, and under ordinary circumstances I should pass this one by unnoticed; but the position of Dr. Hun, as presiding officer of the Allopathic State Medical Society, and his general reputation for liberality and learning, invest his specifications with an importance which they would not otherwise possess, and seem to render some rejoinder desirable. I propose, therefore, to occupy the remainder of the time assigned to me by a review of the assumptions of Dr. Hun in regard to Homœopathy, as the latest phase which the opposition to our science has assumed.

The animus of the assault deserves only a passing notice, as we can afford not to reciprocate it, but the logic employed by Dr. Hun and the concessions made by him, are note-worthy indications of the present attitude of that controversy which agitates the medical world, and which especially keeps the old schools of practice in a ferment of uncertainty and misgivings.

Dr. Hun admits the errors and impostures of the "regular" profession; he admits that Homœopathsists, as a class, are not chargeable with that sort of quackery which consists of dishonorable and indecorous professional conduct; he admits that most of them "have gone through a regular course of instruction, and have been pronounced by the proper boards qualified to practice," so they cannot be charged with gross ignorance; he admits that there are many "eminent lawyers, learned divines, shrewd and prudent merchants, who conduct their affairs with discretion," who are capable of "forming a sound judgment on any subject, and who yet adopt the Homœopathic system of practice for themselves and their families;" he admits that "a great many recoveries take place under Homœopathic treatment," and he allows also that "there is no fixed orthodoxy in medicine," and that, within Allopathic limits, "the common sense of the profession does not call a man a quack nor exclude him from association, simply because he is thought to be absurd and wrong-headed, nor even because he promulgates a system, which, like the exploded system of Brousaïs, is deemed false in reasoning and pernicious in practice."

As Homœopathsists we may feel under no particular burden of obligation for these concessions, extorted as they are by palpable facts from lips all too reluctant to praise and all too ready to censure; but the "general world" of mankind may well adopt a vote of thanks to Dr. Hun for his exposure of what is not deemed quackery *inside* of the "regular profession;" and it goes very far towards neutralizing all testimony from the same source against what may be denounced as quackery *outside* of the said "regular profession." For, by the showing of Dr. Hun, a man may adopt and propagate a system which is regarded by his brethren as "false in reasoning and pernicious in practice," i. e., injurious or fatal to the patient; and yet the common sense of the profession will not suffer him to be called a quack, nor exclude him from association and recognition as a "regular," so long as he sails under Allopathic colors and maintains professional decorum. He is thus obliged to say, in substance, we cannot stigmatize any physician as unworthy of public patronage and professional confidence, merely because he is so wrong-headed as to persist in a method which we see kills instead of cures, for then we should be obliged to brand a portion of our own number as quacks—nothing is quackery which is scientific, and nothing is scientific unless it is Allopathic.

What then, it may well be inquired, are the grave delinquencies of a system which, like Homœopathy, is adopted and approved, and trusted by educated and conscientious men, (which, so far from being "pernicious and injurious," has proved to be eminently safe and successful in practice) that it should be proscribed as quackery, and its practitioners denied the common courtesies of the profession that are freely accorded to the "absurd and wrong-headed" Allopathist?

Dr. Hun holds the following language: "Though great latitude of opinion is tolerated in medicine, yet, to this, there must be some limits. The most opposite doctrines may be promulgated; the most opposite modes of practice may be proposed, and yet neither party claim the right to turn the other out of the profession; but, after all, there must be some show of sense or reason in these doctrines or this practice. There must, in fine

be some limits to the absurdities which a man may be allowed to maintain. Now, Homœopathy passes those limits."

Very good; there is such a thing as quackery; and both the profession and its patients have good cause for a wholesome horror of it. But what are those limits, beyond which if a physician passes he becomes a quack? Since, in Dr. Hun's opinion, mere fatal error, or the habitual sacrifice of the patient's interests to a false and pernicious system, does not militate against good fellowship with the profession; since "the most opposite doctrines may be promulgated, and the most opposite modes of treatment may be proposed," without incurring the terrible charge of quackery, where is the boundary line?

Dr. Hun proposes to find it at the point of self-evident absurdity, and he declares that Homœopathy is justly obnoxious to the charge of quackery, because it passes beyond those limits. It has no "show of sense in its doctrines, or of reason in its practice." "It is so absurd and illogical that its refutation is difficult, only because logic cannot grasp propositions so utterly unreasonable."

This is the dire offence which, in the judgment of Dr. Hun, merits so severe a sentence. Not because Homœopathy is unsuccessful or injurious; not because its practitioners are ignorant or uneducated; nor because they resort to dishonorable or unprofessional ways of attracting attention or extending their practice, for none of these things are charged against us; but because it is self-evidently *absurd*. It might be unfounded in right reason, and unsafe—even "pernicious"—in practice; but if there were only some plausibility in it—"some *show* of sense or reason," it might still have escaped the censure so glibly passed upon it. But "absurdity" is such high treason against the whole medical fraternity, as at once to deserve the forfeiture of all professional rights. If any complain that an unwarranted discrimination is thereby made against us and our system, while "in the past we find many *absurd* pretensions to blush for," as well as "many fatal errors to deplore," which, nevertheless, did not debar their authors from professional comity and respect—if any think it a little hard that we should be worse treated than the disciples of Broussais who, "although their master was called *absurd* and wrong-headed," and his, now exploded, system was denounced as "false in reasoning and pernicious in practice," were never called quacks, nor excluded from association with the rest of the profession; they should remember the important and "self-evident" distinction that those absurdities were not *Homœopathic*. That makes all the difference. At least I think it would be difficult to discover any other.

The charge of "self-evident absurdity," although a convenient method of avoiding discussion, is not always conclusive as to the final judgment of mankind. It has often before been made in reference to ideas, discoveries and inventions, the truth and value of which time and experience have ultimately demonstrated and confirmed. In these days especially, when the developments in science and the arts are constantly obliging us to modify or completely change our former views, it behooves us not to be too bold in our denials, nor too hasty in denouncing as absurd, every thing that appears new or unusual.

Dr. Hun compliments Homœopathy as having been "for twenty-five years the prevailing medical heresy." He allows that its practitioners have, as a class, "gone through a regular course of instruction, and have been pronounced by the proper boards, qualified to practice." He admits, as we have already seen, that "there is a class in which are found eminent lawyers, learned divines, shrewd and prudent merchants, who conduct their affairs with wisdom and discretion, and who yet adopt the Homœopathic system of practice for themselves and their families;" and he might have added, that in every community, where the system has been fairly represented, its chief adherents and supporters are of that class. It is not among the ignorant and the uncultivated that it makes its first and its firmest converts. It is only by slow degrees that it gains the confidence of the lower classes, who are much more likely to estimate the value of a prescription according to its size, the number of its ingredients, its nauseousness, or the immediate impression it makes upon the patient. But Dr. Hun knows perfectly well, or he may know if he will take a little pains to inquire, that the patrons and upholders of Homœopathy are everywhere, those who are not only "eminent," "learned" and "shrewd" in their several professions and conduct their own affairs "with wisdom and discretion," but that their very habits of weighing evidence, examining testimony, looking after their interests and regarding all subjects from a practical, utilitarian and common sense point of view, enables them to form as sound a judgment on medical matters as those whose prejudices, instincts or interests lead them to adhere to the old routine.

Now, is it altogether modest in Dr. Hun, or any man, to pronounce the sentence of "self-evident absurdity" upon a doctrine science, or practice, that is accepted, believed in, and trusted by men of this class? Nay, is it not the height of presumption? For twenty-five years Homœopathy has been the "prevailing medical heresy." Its practitioners are men of regular medical training, have observed all the legal and usual requirements, have been pronounced by proper (Allopathic) judges qualified by education, moral character and decorous deportment, to assume the duties and responsibilities of a profession scarcely inferior in importance to any other. Who shall say that they are less qualified than others to form opinions on subjects of controversy, or that in changing their views or adhering to this practice they have been influenced by more unworthy motives than those who, with or without examination of the subject prefer to remain Allopathists? Dr. Hun concedes the right of every man who has learned his profession "to form opinions and adopt a practice according to the best light he can find." Is it not to be presumed that Homœopathic physicians have exercised this right conscientiously and intelligently?

For a quarter of a century, and more, many "learned," "shrewd," "eminent," "wise" and "prudent" men have been treated according to the method of this "prevailing heresy"—they have preferred it for themselves—they have trusted to it those more dear than themselves—but they have not yet discovered its "self-evident absurdity." And is it not somewhat remarkable that a system so far "beyond the reach of logical refutation" because of its utter absurdity, without any unprofessional or indecorous propagandism on the part of its advocates, without resort to dishonorable

and clap-trap expedients to gain popularity, and in spite of the persistent opposition of the so-called "regular" profession, should for so many years have maintained its hold upon the confidence of the public, making converts from Allopathic ranks, extending itself in every civilized country, establishing its dispensaries, hospitals and schools, gaining in strength and influence where it has been longest known, and yet at this time be more than ever, the prevailing medical heresy? That the system is safe, efficient and reasonable, we have the evidence of thousands of scientific, shrewd and thoughtful men, who have tried it in the crucible of actual experience for a series of years. That it is "self-evidently absurd," we have the assertion of Dr. Hun.

That large and respectable portion of the non-medical public—that it is both large and respectable is conceded—who, after more or less experience and observation of its benefits discard the old system—who so far agree with Dr. Hun as to believe it "unworthy of the age and the present condition of science," and choose Homœopathy instead as being more safe and successful—are excused for their defection on the general ground of ignorance, notwithstanding their learning, their shrewdness, their prudence in ordinary affairs; in regard to the merits of medical systems they are strangely uninformed and indifferent. "The truth is," says our author, "these men neither believe nor disbelieve in the system. They have not taken the pains to examine into it, and do not know exactly what it is. Just as this same class of men is in general, unacquainted with the medical doctrines of the regular profession."

What is it then that induces these otherwise discreet and prudent people to forsake the good old ways of Allopathic orthodoxy for this silly delusion, this "prevailing heresy" of Homœopathy? What strange hallucination beguiles these usually sensible men to trust their dearest interests to such a "self-evident absurdity?" We need not go beyond this same address for a solution of the difficulty. Let us hear our learned author's explanation of it. "That which they do believe," says he, "is that sick persons, when treated according to the Homœopathic system, recover at least as well as when treated according to the regular practice, thus founding their judgment, not on the reasonableness of the system, but on what seems to them to be its fruits." Well, is not that a reasonable foundation for their judgment? And is not even the unlearned and way-faring man competent to judge of medical systems as well as of moral character, by the fruits exhibited? But Dr. Hun has more to say on this subject. "It is within the recollection and experience of most of those here present, that no person, whatever might be his age or circumstances, was allowed by his physician to go through an attack of measles or scarlet fever, or indeed *any disease* however grave or slight it might be, without being made to swallow a certain amount of nauseous and nauseating medicine which greatly increased the pain and discomfort of the sickness; and the administration of this medicine was held out as absolutely necessary for safety. Now the Homœopathist, in similar cases, is seen to give an infinitesimal dose in a palatable form, and [remember Dr. Hun is still on the stand] *the patient recovers equally well.*" Now if that is the case, that the comparatively pleasant and gentle treatment of the one system is equally efficacious with

the nauseous and distressing method of the other, why should not those who only seek to be cured naturally choose the pleasanter way of obtaining the desired relief, whether they understand the philosophy of the system or not. They may not know or care to understand the *modus operandi* of the remedies, but they are just as competent to appreciate their effects as a medical professor or even the President of a State medical society. What matters it to the poor victim of intermittent fever whether the quinine that cures him does so by virtue of its action on the nervous system, upon the blood, the ultimate fibre, or the liver ; whether it acts as a tonic, or as an astringent, as an anti-spasmodic or an anti-periodic ; and is he not as well qualified to judge of its salutary effects as if he were familiar with all the various and conflicting theories on the subject that have been advanced during the last two hundred years ? Why should prudent and sensible men ignore the evidence of their senses, because they cannot or do not comprehend all the why and wherefore ?

But if a "mere statement of the Homœopathic doctrine is sufficient for its own refutation," with all rightly constituted minds, suppose Dr. Hun inaugurates a holy crusade against the prevailing ignorance on medical subjects. A mere statement of the fundamental principles of the Homœopathic way of cure could be embraced in a pamphlet of moderate size, and if widely disseminated might tend to dispel the general darkness. We would be happy to join in such a charitable enterprise, especially if it included a statement of the principles of Allopathy, and such an exposition of its advantages as might be derived from his own essay. I would respectfully suggest such extracts as the following from that interesting production :

"Assailed from within and without, our profession presents the remarkable spectacle of an art sinking in public estimation and in the confidence of its own practitioners, while the science on which it is founded is applauded for the conquests it is constantly making. It has even been said of us, as of the priests at the decline of paganism, that two physicians in the practice of their art cannot look each other in the face without smiling at the credulity of their dupes."

"Nor is it among the public only that confidence in our art is impaired, for even in our own profession are to be found men remarkable for intelligence and scientific attainments who are led by their science to a state of practical skepticism."

"In the past we find many absurd pretensions to blush for, and many fatal errors to deplore, and even in our own day a routine of practice still prevails which is unworthy of the age and of the present condition of our science."

"There must be some cause for this error of the public, and we may safely assume that if our profession had been altogether worthy of confidence, it would not have been treated with distrust by men of intelligence and sound judgment, who are at least sincere in their choice ; for what they first of all wish for is the restoration of health, and not the gratification of any spite against our profession."

"The success of Homœopathy, which for the last twenty-five years has been the prevailing medical heresy, has been due not to any merit of the

system, but to the previous errors and impostures of the regular profession."

"In most cases there is nothing to be done but to watch the patient as the disease runs its course."

"But the advocate of Homœopathy replies to the explanation I offer: If nature suffices for the cure of these diseases, why is it that formerly, and even at this day, so much disagreeable medicine is given in these very cases by physicians? To this I know of but one answer: The profession has been and still is in error. Much of the medicine given was and is unnecessary and even hurtful."

With this plain statement of the case, so easily made and spread before the public, all eager, as you well say, "for the restoration of health, and not for the gratification of any spite against our profession," who doubts that the door of every intelligent household would soon be closed against Homœopathic humbugs, since all persons, with rightly constituted minds, would prefer to be scientifically killed rather than absurdly cured.

I am not willing, however, to concede so much ignorance on the part of the advocates and patrons of Homœopathy as is taken for granted by Dr. Hun. I believe that the experience of the members of this society will sanction the statement that there is among the intelligent class of Homœopathic laity no small amount of information on medical topics, and a discriminating appreciation of the peculiarities and principles of the system they have espoused, as well as a much better acquaintance with the theories and methods of our opponents than is usual among those who still adhere to the Allopathic regime. Several admirable expositions of the system of Hahnemann have been prepared by non-professional men. The able and satisfactory essays of Eustaphieue, Everest, Wilkinson and others of this class, have rendered important assistance in extending a knowledge of our principles and treatment; while various familiar treatises of like character by physicians have been written and published to meet the popular demand.

As Dr. Hun disposes of the *doctrine* of Homœopathy by this summary sentence of self-evident absurdity, and so refuses to reason concerning its truth, we are bound to conclude that he has disposed of its *facts* in the same way, and by refusing to receive them as evidence. The assumption that our doctrine is absurd, has compelled him to the consequent assumption that our practice is futile. He cannot repeat against Homœopathy the charge of being pernicious and dangerous, as he allows much of the practice of his own school to be. Our dose is too small for that, it is simply powerless, a nothing, a cheat. We make our patients believe they have swallowed medicine when they have only tasted sugar, or water! But still the facts, the countless cures alleged to be wrought in our practice, and attested by so many competent witnesses in all classes of society, must be somehow resolved into fancies and phantoms, or they may seem like evidences to rebut the charge of self-evident absurdity. And how is this to be done? Dr. Hun has found a method of explaining our *apparent* success, viz: Homœopathy counts among its cures only those cases in which recovery would have taken place without medicine. It creates a reputation out of nothing "by giving frightful names to mild diseases," (a

trick which, by his own showing, we might have learned from the "regulars," who, as he suggests, often leave on the mother's mind the impression when a child has recovered from spasmodic croup "that if the doctor had not diligently used remedies it would have passed into membranous croup.") And so he leaps to the predetermined conclusion required by his theory of absurdity, and sweeps all recovery under our treatment into the same category of "mild diseases." The cases given over to death, or too malignant to be reached by any art or agency of Allopathy, and yet made every whit whole by the absurdity of infinitesimal doses, are conveniently left out of the account. Authentic reports of some chronic disease successfully treated according to this method, after the patient had spent all his living upon the old school of physicians and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse, are accessible to Dr. Hun at any time when his mind may be open to conviction. Yellow fever is not generally ranked among mild diseases, yet in 1843 the Trustees of the Mississippi Asylum, at Natchez, after a fair trial of both systems, felt obliged to dismiss Allopathic treatment altogether in that disease and adopt Homœopathy exclusively. Cholera is not yet accounted a mild disease, yet statistics from different hospitals in Europe and America show that when Allopathy was losing from 46 to 75 per cent. of its cholera patients, our practice was losing from 13 to 33 per cent. And are the families which patronize Homœopathy peculiarly favored with exemption from malignant and violent sicknesses? Does it not occur to some "well constituted minds" that among the many "shrewd and prudent" people who have accepted us through a term of years as their family physicians, there ought to be now and then one whose intelligent solicitude for the relief of his suffering household would sharpen his eyes so as to see that our remedies are powerless?

At the outset Dr. Hun virtually, though unwittingly, acknowledges himself disqualified to testify concerning the merits or demerits of our system. The convenient and easy charge of self-evident absurdity, carries with it not only a refusal to reason or be reasoned with, but also a confession that the matter has not been deemed worthy of any other than a superficial examination. This is a confession of ignorance arising from prejudice or prejudgment—a confession of mental condition which utterly unfits any man to express or even form an opinion on any given subject. Newton's rebuke to Halley was severe as courteous, "I have studied this matter, you have not." Solomon's rebuke to that self-sufficiency that presumes to pronounce judgment without examination, is somewhat sharper, "he that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is a shame and folly unto him." Dr. Hun is a man of wide and various knowledge; I do not seek to discredit his judgment in matters of which he is competent to speak, but of Homœopathy it may be both a misfortune and a fault that he is wholly ignorant.

Is not this a marvel in the history of a great and beneficent science? A hundred men having brought all their wit and wisdom to the work of testing an alleged improvement, unanimously speak out of their personal knowledge, and as unanimously declare that this alleged improvement is real and worthy of acceptance; they affirm that it is founded in truth and justified by experience. Another hundred, equally interested in the object of the improvement, not only refuse to examine for themselves or to receive

the testimony of others, but denounce as knaves and fools those who commend the improvement to public notice.

I have no defence to offer to the Doctor's charitable hypothesis by which he accounts for our adoption of a system so absurd, illogical and unreasonable in the following terms: "Those who are capable of making advance in science do not adopt such a system except for the sake of money." As Allopathic physicians are never known to charge anything for their professional services, the full and undivided force of this blow falls on us with crushing weight!

But Dr. Hun has yet another and more serious ground of accusation against the object of his assault. Its principles are not only irrational, illogical and absurd, its pretended success in practice illusory, its practitioners mercenary and dishonest, and its learned, shrewd and prudent dupes ignorant of the theory to which they trust their health and lives. It is not only all this, but more than this; Homœopathy is recreant to the traditions of the profession. According to this authority "the Homœopathic system discards the whole body of medical science as constituted by the labors of successive generations, and founds the art of healing on something entirely different from this science."

Suppose that it were true. Two suggestions immediately occur to the mind as a counterpoise to this indictment, or at least as an extenuating plea. The first is, that neither to the humane and conscientious physician, nor to his sick and suffering patients, can it be of much importance whether the method of treatment pursued accords with the traditional notions of the schools or not, if only it is successful. I understand that it is the chief duty of the medical man to consult, first of all, the interests of the sick who may be entrusted to his care, rather than to vindicate any particular theory however plausible it may appear to be; and that he is bound to cure them, if he can, by the surest and most expeditious means available. No matter whether those means are consonant with his accepted hypothesis or no, if he has sufficient testimony to their efficacy and superiority, he has no right to deny his patients the advantage of their application. Not he who adheres most rigidly to the dogmas of his accepted theory, or blindly follows his system through thick and thin, is most likely to deserve the confidence of his patients, but rather he who, rising above mere hypothesis, is willing to acknowledge the supreme logic of facts whether they tend to confirm or contradict his preconceived ideas.

The second suggestion that naturally occurs to any one who has carefully followed the doctor's argument is, that even though the charge contained any real force, it comes with an ill grace from one who has just laid himself open to the same imputation. In the course of his address, Dr. Hun has freely indulged in animadversions on the errors and abuses, the baseless theories and pernicious modes of treatment prevalent in his branch of the profession, and has asserted, without qualification, the necessity of departing from the worn-out systems so long followed, and a reconstruction of therapeutical tenets more conformable to the advanced and improved condition of modern science. It would be difficult to mention any notion or principle heretofore held and accepted as a part of any medical creed, that he does not, either directly or by implication, repudiate and deny—any recognized mode of treatment that he does not scoff at as

nugatory or injurious. Even the idea, universally received and acted upon by all medical authority in every age, that diseases are curable by medicines, *he* pronounces a "pestilent heresy." We have seen that, according to his own statement, "the most opposite doctrines may be promulgated and the most opposite methods of treatment may be proposed," without the risk of professional excommunication. We are also informed that "there is no fixed orthodoxy in medicine," and that "each man, having learned his profession, is allowed to form opinions and adopt a practice according to the best light he can find." What to him, as he passes the actual state of the profession in review, are the old axioms, the established methods, the stereotyped routine of his own school and its practitioners? Now, he caricatures the absurdities which he holds up to view, and now brands with a darker character the faulty and injurious practice which he stigmatizes as it deserves. He discards, without hesitation, the most venerable and cherished opinions, and looks forward to the establishment of new and better principles of medical procedure.

Now, having gone thus far, he may not be bound to accept Homœopathy; but we hold that he is obliged to exonerate it and its professors from the trammels of an effete system, which he himself rejects. Refusing himself to be restrained by the tenets of preceding systems, and proposing principles of treatment which, whether true or not, are utterly incongruous with the traditional teaching of any age, I submit that *he*, at any rate, cannot, consistently, charge any system with quackery or irregularity on the ground that it also ignores those traditions.

But the truth is, so far as Homœopathy is concerned, that the accusation is unfounded, and Dr. Hun wastes his ammunition when he directs against the system of Hahnemann the charge of disregarding the traditions of medical science to found a science *ab ovo*. We recognize the truth equally with him, that "every great catholic doctrine has its roots in the past," and that every science has its traditions, the slowly gathering results of manifold strivings after truth—often obscured and overlaid with error and crude conceits—often mixed with vague speculations—and sometimes well nigh lost and forgotten—but still the legitimate basis of all subsequent improvement. Instead of discarding those traditions, Hahnemann's great discovery reconciles all that was true in their seeming contradictions, and illuminates what was dark in their applications by solving that primal question which has been the perplexity of all the past. So far from being without "roots in the past," it is the ripest fruit of all previous experience and inquiry. "Not to destroy, but to fulfil," was Hahnemann's mission, for while his system abolishes and supplants a useless, cumbrous and outworn medical ritual, it does yet preserve and exalt, in sublime and simplified form, all that was true and beautiful and good.

Dr. Hun charges against Homœopathy that, "although the system has been in existence more than half a century, and has been well known over the world more than thirty years, so that a medical generation has grown up under it, yet it cannot show a single improvement in medical science by one of its professors." Indeed! and is it no improvement in medical science to have discovered and verified its own fundamental principle? Is it no improvement to have multiplied the facilities of medical art? Does

the vast task of reorganizing the *Materia Medica*, legitimating the selection of remedial agents by the collection of countless cases and often by experiment upon our own bodies, pass for nothing with a devotee of science, who can yet afford to rejoice over microscopic discoveries in a fungus? In the body of his address our essayist laments and deplores the defective condition of *practical* medicine; compared with the brilliant results attained in the correlative sciences, he admits that the view of the practical side of the question is far from flattering. The established and inevitable treatment of a few years ago he scruples not to impugn as "barbarous," and adds that, "even in our own day a routine of practice still prevails, which is unworthy of the age and of the present condition of our science." Now it is just in this department—on all hands confessed to be the weak point in the profession, and the most essential—that the discovery and application of the Homœopathic law of cure is destined to accomplish the most splendid results. Great as has already been the improvement effected in therapeutics by its partial adoption and limited development, far more important advantages to suffering humanity may, assuredly, be anticipated when the resources of the system are better understood and more widely extended. Surely it would seem that every well intended effort, however feeble, towards improvement, when improvement is so much needed, ought to be encouraged rather than decried. And are we to have no credit either for having compelled Allopathy to revise and ameliorate its own methods? For, I suppose, it will not be denied that, whatever modifications have been introduced into the old school medical treatment, during the last thirty years, tending to increase its usefulness, or, at least, to mitigate its inflictions, have been in great part due to the influence and example of Homœopathy.

While frankly admitting that we have as yet done little for the furtherance of medical science in some directions, we claim to have more than balanced the account by our diligent pursuit of a new department of inquiry which has yielded practical results of the highest importance to humanity, and is destined to effect still greater achievements in the future.

We recognize the great value of all knowledge which gives the physician a more intimate acquaintance with the mysteries of life, its instruments, its processes and its relations to external nature; yet we shall be able to excuse those treasure-hunters who are comparatively negligent of grains of silver because they are finding nuggets of gold. Of the absolute value of Anatomy, Physiology, Animal Chemistry, &c., there is no question: concerning their relative value, no one knows better than Dr. Hun, that there is room for honest difference of opinion. A certain degree of knowledge in these and all cognate sciences is indispensable to the physician as mathematician to the navigator; but the most skillful anatomist, or the best read physiologist or expert chemist, is no more sure to be the most successful clinical practitioner, than the best mathematician is to be the safest seaman. Few physicians in active practice can pretend to keep even with the rapid advances in either of these branches of knowledge. Even the limited acquaintance with them that enables a candidate to pass examination, grows rusty with years, their technical details fade out of the memory,

or are crowded into the background by the more practical and pressing facts to be met and mastered in every sick-room.

We, nevertheless, protest against the injustice which charges us with indifference to any department of inquiry which can have any bearing, however remote, on the progress and improvement of our art. It could hardly be expected, however, that in its first half-century, Homœopathy should outstrip the progress made by Allopathy in three thousand years, especially in those directions pursued by both schools in common, and for which the older had almost a monopoly of facilities. Nor is it to our discredit that we have not been kept by a false pride from availing ourselves of the help which comes from other men's labors. The very fact that the old school institutions and *savans*, half despairing of success in Therapeutics, are pushing their researches in subordinate and collateral branches, and that the rich results of their devotion have become public property, spares us the need of so much independent effort, and permits us to pursue, with undivided diligence, our appointed task of enlarging the *Materia Medica*, verifying its application to disease, and developing and extending the resources in our possession.

We will be no party to a needless quarrel. Homœopathy would walk side by side with Allopathy in the paths of general science, in the pursuit of anatomical knowledge, and in honest endeavor to mark and classify the symptoms peculiar to every form of disease. Whatever is known or knowable in the departments of Physiology, Pathology, Diagnosis, Hygiene, &c., must be appropriated with genuine satisfaction as common property and of equal interest to sensible medical men of every school. We trust that all that deserves the name of science is sought as sincerely, and accepted as freely and gratefully by us as by those who deem it meritorious to denounce us as unscientific pretenders.

In short, Homœopathy differs from all preceding schools in its *principles and practice of medicine*, and not in respect of general knowledge, nor in its recognition of physiological and correlative facts.

And it would be quackery indeed, did we affect any peculiar exemption from the danger of misapprehending disease. Whatever uncertainty attends diagnosis, whatever embarrassments grow out of obscure and peculiar conditions of the patient, hereditary tendencies, temperament, sex, psychological or climatic influences, we share in common with others. So far as the operation of medicine is modified or neutralized by unobserved or undiscoverable causes, all administration is helpless. We are hindered in our work accordingly, and we should be foolish indeed, not to welcome from any and all sources light on these shadowed paths.

But what we claim in advance of our rivals is this, that when a Homœopathic physician has once made a true diagnosis, or a complete digest of symptoms, he has a sure rule to guide him in the selection of a remedy, and unless the symptoms are wholly new, so as to indicate no remedy yet included in the *Materia Medica*, or unless the nature of the disease renders a cure impossible, or unless he be defeated by the folly of nurse or patient, he has a right to be confident of success, and that this confidence rests on a rational, scientific basis—on the uniformity of relation between cause and effect. If he suffer from uncertainty it may be from the difficulty of

acquiring the necessary information, but never from misgiving as to the principle that should govern its treatment. Whereas abundant proof might be deduced from physicians whose eminent attainments and extended experience, render their testimony unimpeachable, that Allopathy condemns its most conscientious practitioners to the double torture of uncertainty concerning the disease, and uncertainty concerning the true principle of treatment after the disease itself is known. And this torture increases with increasing experience. As Dr. Hun himself mildly expresses it, "after a career more or less prolonged, some look back with painful doubts, whether, upon the whole, their art has been of service to mankind." But we might fill pages with the testimony of men foremost in the ranks of Homœopathy—men whose convictions brought them from the old school where they had enjoyed reputation and respect—all going to show that the beneficent and beautiful results of their daily practice furnish cumulative proof of the correctness of the fundamental law affirmed by Hahnemann, proof of precisely the same quality as that which assures the chemist of the uniformity of nature's operations. Of course there is room for perpetual progress in the development of our knowledge and resources; but being once certain of the path, we can go on towards perfection with hopeful steps. We may challenge Europe and America to produce a single instance in which a clear-headed and duly qualified physician of our school has ever thrown up his profession from that kind of disgust which leads many an eminent physician to exclaim like the one quoted by D'Alembert: "I am tired of guessing."

Let us then improve this occasion by a renewal of mutual congratulations, that our increasing experience is an increasing pleasure, since we find ourselves the honored instruments of Providence in conferring continual benefits on our fellow-beings, in relieving human suffering, thereby exercising our own spirits in those high offices of good will which make our profession, when wisely and conscientiously followed, suggestive of that celestial ministry which we may hope to share in the immortal life.

